

**NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

Town Hall, 525 Washington Street, Wellesley, Massachusetts 02482-5992

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Brandon Schmitt, Director
Telephone: 781.431.1019, Ext. 2298
Facsimile: 781.237.6495
Website: www.wellesleyma.gov/NRC

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Dear Wellesley Business Owner:

We are writing to make sure you are aware of the specific provisions of the new bylaw on shopping bags that will apply to all Wellesley merchants. The bylaw was approved by Wellesley Town Meeting in April 2016 with the goals of reducing litter, ensuring that all shopping bags distributed in Wellesley can be recycled, and creating a more environmentally sustainable community. For your reference a list of frequently asked questions is included with this letter and the full text of the bylaw is available on our website: <http://www.wellesleyma.gov/NRC>

Timing: For stores that are 3,500 square feet or larger, and for chain stores that have more than one outlet in Wellesley, the bylaw will take effect on **January 25, 2017**. For stores smaller than 3,500 square feet, the bylaw will take effect on **April 12, 2017**.

Plastic Bags: The new bylaw prohibits the distribution of single-use, plastic check-out bags that are less than 4 mils thick. The bylaw does *not* prohibit plastic produce bags, newspaper bags, dry cleaning bags, dog waste bags, garbage bags, or any other plastic film product. Non-retail businesses such as medical or dental offices are not covered by the bylaw. However, the NRC requests that *all* business owners refrain from distributing plastic bags because the bags create an environmental hazard and are no longer collected for recycling at the Wellesley Recycling and Disposal Facility.

Paper Bags: The new bylaw requires that all paper shopping bags must be 100 percent recyclable and made with at least 40 percent post-consumer recycled material (already an industry standard). Paper bags must be labeled with this information to comply with the bylaw. Please note that paper shopping bags with non-recyclable string or ribbon handles are prohibited.

Reusable Bags: The bylaw outlines specifications for bags that may be distributed or sold as "reusable." The purpose of these specifications is to avoid distribution of bags that are not truly reusable. The NRC is committed to long-term public promotion of reusable bags as the best solution for our environment.

Enforcement: The Wellesley Board of Health will enforce the bylaw through written warning notices and fines for continued non-compliance. Health Department Director Lenny Izzo may grant a six-month extension for compliance if the law causes undue hardship or if a business needs more time to draw down an existing inventory of bags.

We would be glad to answer any questions about the bylaw requirements and we look forward to working with you to build a more sustainable future for our community.

Sincerely,

Brandon Schmitt, Director
Wellesley Natural Resources Commission
781-431-1019, ext. 2294
nrc@wellesleyma.gov

Enclosure (1): What You Need to Know About the New Wellesley Bylaw on Shopping Bags